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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000915

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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI CELEBRATES 27 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

11. (U) SUMMARY: Djibouti marked the 27th anniversary of its independence from France, Sunday, June 27, 2004 with Government hosted celebrations including a military parade and a reception at the Presidential Palace. Ambassador with USLO attended the early morning parade, and was accompanied by USLO, Pol/Econ, PAO and USAID at the presidential reception. There, in the presence of his cabinet, parliament members, the former President of Djibouti, village elders and a host of other Djiboutian citizens and invited guests, President Ismael Omar Guelleh addressed the population in two speeches: one in French and one in Somali. In his remarks in French, he spoke about measuring progress, the necessity of building a democratic state, his own progress as President, ties with the larger world, and the problems of Iraq, the Palestinians, Somalia and Sudan in the Near East and Horn of Africa region. Guelleh's speech in Somali was impromptu and was not published in the newspapers or copied to the diplomatic community. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) President Ismael Omar Guelleh's speech in French to the people of Djibouti began by underlining the importance of progress taking time, saying "the progress of nations is not measured by a combination of ephemeral events, but by successive historic steps taken by each generation to leave the next with the best of its own." Guelleh continued that in celebrating the day of independence, "it reminds us to ask ourselves if each one of us has done all that can be done for succeeding generations." Guelleh transitioned into the topic of presidential elections by speaking of next year's celebration being led by "the leaders chosen by the Djiboutian people in the next presidential election."

13. (U) Guelleh commented that whoever is elected will be expected to build an efficient democratic state which stands against all forms of discrimination, continue to build a liberal economy to generate wealth and employment, construct a society of solidarity and favor a cultural renaissance in line with the times, respectful of the Djiboutian identity.

14. (U) Guelleh was confident in assessing his performance of the objectives he initiated, saying "I believe that we have reached the objectives that constitute a reinvention of a modern and modest nation, conscious not to just take the missions that it is able to accomplish, but determined to assume full responsibility, with forward thinking and the capacity of innovation." Guelleh continued that "the best sign of our commitment to independence and the most solid gauge of its longevity resides in the concretisation of our firm will to render justice to the women of Djibouti." Guelleh also highlighted his administration's creation of a Family Code of Law, which using a combination of French civil code and Sharia law, and replaces the use of Sharia law in family matters.

15. (U) Guelleh's speech also addressed the widening of Djibouti's diplomatic circles and friendships around the globe. Guelleh commented that the decision by COMESA to hold the next summit in Djibouti is a "mark of confidence in the manner of Djiboutian diplomacy over the past 27 years striving to make an efficient instrument of service to our economic ambition and to present the international scene with a confirmation of our will to work towards peace and harmony throughout, for African and Arab-Islamic unity."

16. (U) Speaking on the current round of Somali peace talks in Nairobi, Guelleh said that after two years of negotiation, its final phase "fulfills the hopes that we have, in the course of this summer by the grace of God, for the creation of republican institutions under the sovereign will of the Somali people." Guelleh then called for international support of the next Somali government saying, "no structure of a State can be viable if the international community does not cement its support by furnishing and accompanying the institution of the next Somali government, with the human, material and financial means necessary to accomplish its mission."

17. (U) Guelleh added, however, that "by contrast, the Republic of Djibouti will never accept the destructive policy aimed at failure, which guides Mister Sharon in leading the Palestinian conflict. He has anchored himself into a unilateral vision, excluding completely the Palestinian people with the firm will to install an Israeli country in the Palestinian territory." He continued "Mister Sharon demonstrates once again his will to simply deny the existence of the Palestinian people. We remain convinced that, with

this arrangement, there cannot be peace in the framework negotiated for the existence of two nations within viable territories."

18. (U) Guelleh closed his speech by applauding the signing of the Sudan peace accords, congratulating the United Nations for their efforts to "help the Iraqi people in their pursuit of peace and security," He stated: "We remain convinced that the process of returning the leadership of their own destiny to the hands of the Iraqi people by way of a provisional council constitutes the wisest road for the return of peace and security to the hearts and spirits of our Iraqi brethren, and we will continue to support all engagements carried out to safeguard the unity, the sovereignty of the Iraqi people and the integrity of Iraq."

19. (U) Broad press coverage in "La Nation" newspaper was given to President Bush's message of congratulations on the occasion of Djibouti's national day.
RAGSDALE